

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3817

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 3462

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PA

SUBJECT: FMS AND PARAGUAY

REF: A. STATE 203286, B. ASUNCION 2965, C. ASUNCION 2029

D. ASUNCION 417

SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY REQUESTS RECONSIDERATION OF THE DECISION TO DROP PARAGUAY FROM THE FY 80 MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND STRONGLY RECOMMENDS A MODEST FY 80 PROGRAM FOR PARAGUAY FOR THE REASONS GIVEN BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE INFORMATION PROVIDED REFTEL AND HOPE WE CAN KEEP IN CLOSER TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION TO AVOID FUTURE CONFUSION.

2. MISSION WAS DESTRESSED TO LEARN FROM PARA 5 REFTEL THAT BUREAU DROPPED PARAGUAY FROM FY80 MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM WITHOUT REQUESTING EMBASSY COMMENT OR OUR RECOMMENDATION ON THIS COURSE OF ACTION. AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT IN VARIOUS POLICY MESSAGES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS (REFTELS), WE CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT A MODEST MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR PARAGUAY IS USEFUL TO BOTH COUNTRIES, HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN OUR EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION WITH A KEY ELEMENT IN PARAGUAYAN NATIONAL LIFE AND IS HELPFUL IN PROMOTING U.S. INTERESTS ACROSS-THE-BOARD, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS.

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3. WE CONSIDER IT PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE THAT THE DECISION ON THE FY 80 BUDGET WAS MADE ON THE BASIS THAT PARAGUAY SHOULD BE OMITTED

"AFTER DROPPING SIMILAR REGIMES LIKE NICARAGUA". THE SITUATION IN NICARAGUA, WOULD APPEAR TO BE VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT IN PARAGUAY WHERE, ALL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS, THE STROESSNER REGIME IS HERE

TO STAY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IN THE LAST YEAR THIS REGIME HAS MADE IMPORTANT IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND IT EVIDENTLY STILL COMMANDS SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT AMONG THE PARAGUAYAN PEOPLE. TO LUMP PARAGUAY WITH NICARAGUA, OR OTHER IMPORTANT MILITARY GOVERNMENTS, WHEN MAKING DECISIONS ON U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS, IGNORES VITAL DIFFERENCES IN COUNTRY SITUATIONS, UNDERMINES OUR FLEXIBILITY IN DEALING WITH THE GOP AND UNDERCUTS OUR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE OVERALL U.S. INTERESTS HERE. PROVIDING THE GOP ALLOWS AN IAHRC

VISIT (WHICH WE HAVE STRONG REASONS TO BELIEVE WILL HAPPEN) AND THERE IS NO REGRESSION FROM THE IMPROVEMENTS OF PAST YEAR, WE SEE NO REASON TO ABANDON THE SIZEABLE ADVANTAGES OF RETAINING A MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND MISSION.

4. TO SAY THAT THERE IS SOME FLEXIBILITY FOR FUTURE ADJUSTMENT FOR FY 80 THROUGH REPROGRAMMING FUNDS IGNORES THE BASIC PURPOSE OF OUR PROGRAM. THE OBJECT IS TO RETAIN THE SYMBOLISM OF CONTINUED MILITARY COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. BECAUSE THE LINK IS IMPORTANT TO THE PARAGUAYAN GOVERNMENT AND ARMED FORCES. THE FUNDS PER SE, ALTHOUGH WELCOME TO THE GOP FOR PURPOSES OF THEIR PURCHASING FLEXIBILITY, ARE MUCH LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE SYMBOLISM. TO EXCLUDE THE PROVISION FOR A PARAGUAYAN PROGRAM A YEAR IN ADVANCE WILL BE TAKEN BY THE GOP AS A SIGNAL THAT WE ARE EN ROUTE TO CUTTING THE LINK. IT IS A SIGNAL THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE U.S. SHOULD NOT GIVE AT THE PRESENT TIME. WE BELIEVE THE CPD FOR FY 80 MUST SHOW A PROGRAM IF WE ARE GOING
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TO USE THIS AS A CARROT TO PROMOTE OUR INTERESTS WHETHER BY WITHHOLDING DELIVERIES OF MATERIAL AND DISPATCH OF STUDENT GRANTEES OR BY CARRYING OUT THE PROGRAM IF THE SITUATION WARRANTS OUR RELEASE OF FUNDS.

5. THE EMBASSY THEREFORE REQUESTS THAT THE DEPARTMENT RECONSIDER THE DECISION TO DROP PARAGUAY FROM THE FY 80 FMS REQUEST. IT STRONGLY RECOMMENDS A MODEST FY 80 FMS PROGRAM (AND A MODEST PROGRAM IS ALL THAT IS NECESSARY) FOR THE REASONS SET FORTH IN REFTEL B.
WHITE

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